

January 29, 2002

To: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

VIDEO CONFERENCING IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY JAILS

During a recent discussion about jail violence, the issue of video conferencing arose. This office was asked to provide the Board with a status report on video conferencing in the jails.

Background

The Los Angeles County Justice Inmate Video Conferencing System (JIVCS) is a multi-agency program shared by the Sheriff's Department, Probation Department, and the Office of the Public Defender under the auspices of the Information Systems Advisory Body (ISAB). JIVCS was piloted in 1991 and substantially implemented in 1993. JIVCS allows the face-to-face interviewing of inmates in the County Jail System by Deputy Probation Officers and Public Defender staff using two-way video transmission. JIVCS utilizes a state-of-the-art video conferencing system specifically designed for the criminal justice environment. The jail units are enclosed in a hardened steel-case version of the Probation/Public Defender office workstation units to avoid damage to the units caused by the inmates. The video conferencing hardware and software were funded by a grant from the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Video Conferencing Sites

There are currently 32 custody video workstations housed in County jail facilities and 19 office workstations in County offices for use by Probation and Public Defender staff. A listing of video conferencing equipment sites is attached.

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Video conferencing interviews are scheduled via an automated scheduling system located at Probation and Public Defender offices. A list of scheduled inmate interviews for each day is faxed to the different custody facilities in the morning. Interviews are conducted Monday through Friday. On the average, anywhere between 1,700 and 1,800 videoconference interviews are conducted on a monthly basis. County staff is able to dial into any of the custody video workstations that are set for automatic answer of incoming calls. Custody video workstations are set in the answer only mode and cannot dial out. Video conferencing equipment consists of a television camera, television receiver, telephone handset, digital encoding, compression, and signaling electronics. The interview is transmitted via three Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) circuits. The equipment has been designed to terminate the interview should any attempt to intercept the call be made.

Accomplishments

Video conferencing technology has enhanced the efficiencies of the justice system in several areas. The reduction in inmate transport from jail location to interview location has increased overall County staff safety and enhanced jail security. Reduced vehicle trips and travel costs for both Probation and Public Defender staff has allowed for the most productive use of County staff time. The reduction in the number of single occupant vehicle trips made by County staff to jail facilities has also resulted in improved air quality.

The maintenance and operational costs for JIVCS are budgeted in the ISAB budget and are spread among the three user departments. The development and implementation of the JIVCS project has been a cooperative effort by all project participants.

Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Rosemary Gutierrez of my office at (213) 974-1148.

DEJ: DL
WW:RMG:ljp

Attachment

video.bm